



NAMRU-SA Change of Command Highlights Excellence in Research and Stellar Operations



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1

SAN ANTONIO –Capt. Thomas C. Herzig relieved Capt. Elizabeth A. Montcalm-Smith as commanding officer of the Naval Medical Research Unit – San Antonio (NAMRU-SA) during a change of command held at Joint Base San Antonio, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Aug. 24.

Montcalm-Smith assumed command of NAMRU-SA June 2015, having previously served as the Executive Officer at Naval Medical Research Center in Silver Spring, Maryland.

“In the Navy, we say to excel, you have to be brilliant on the basics. This means that you have to maintain readiness of the staff while passing all the periodic inspections. In other words, you can’t be an outstanding research lab if you can’t pass a fiscal audit,” said Montcalm-Smith.

“One of the accomplishments I’m most proud of is our continuous innovation, while still being brilliant on the basics,” said Montcalm-Smith. Montcalm-Smith and her team were experts on the basics passing all inspections, including the 2017 Medical Inspector General site visit and a fiscal audit where NAMRU-SA received the highest rating available for the audit inspection.

However, the mission of NAMRU-SA is science and as she balanced the many demands of internal and external reviews and inspections, she made certain that getting the science done was first and foremost. Under Montcalm-Smith’s leadership, NAMRU-SA crossed new performance thresholds resulting in a nearly 2-fold increase in completed products from 2015 to 2016.

With a focus on readiness for the warfighter, Montcalm-Smith pioneered NAMRU-SA’s anti-venom research initiative which resulted in two provisional patent applications. This new phage-based universal antidote for the treatment of snakebite venom could clearly translate to treatment products equally beneficial in a civilian setting.

Rear Adm. Paul D. Pearigen, commander, Navy Medicine West and chief of the Navy Medical Corps, served as the principal speaker of the ceremony.

“This is a day of celebration for Elizabeth Montcalm-Smith, Thomas Herzig, their families, and a special day for NAMRU-SA,” said Pearigen. “Today we are honored to express our personal gratitude and thanks to a superb officer, formally effect a change in command, and welcome in another outstanding commanding officer.”

Pearigen also presented Montcalm-Smith with the Legion of Merit in recognition of her job well done.

Herzig assumed command of NAMRU-SA following his assignment as the Executive Officer of the Naval Submarine Medical Research Laboratory.

“The scientists and support staff at this command are outstanding professionals, focused in their commitment to improving the health and readiness of our warfighters,” said Herzig. “I’m looking forward to working with such a talented and dedicated team to ensure that NAMRU-SA will continue to develop innovative treatments and technologies to support our service members across the globe.”

NAMRU-SA serves as one of the leading research and development laboratories of the U.S. Navy under the Department of Defense and is one of eight subordinate research commands in the global network of laboratories operating under the Naval Medical Research Center (NMRC), Silver Spring, Maryland.

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